NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
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AL GRIGIS

CONGRESS AND THE KOREAN HEARINGS

ANNCR:

SOUTH KOREA HAS AGAIN PUBLICLY REFUSED TO ALLOW A FORMER KOREAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TO TESTIFY BEFORE A COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE CONCERNING ALLEGED INFLUENCE BUYING IN CONGRESS. VOA'S AL GRIGIS HAS DETAILS IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

EARLIER THIS WEEK, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CONCERNED OVER THE SLOW PROGRESS OF ITS INVESTIGATION INTO INFLUENCE BUYING OF HOUSE MEMBERS BY SOUTH KOREA, PASSED OVERWHELMINGLY A RESOLUTION DESIGNED TO PRESSURE THE SEOUL GOVERNMENT INTO MAKING FORMER AMBASSADOR KIM DONG JO AVAILABLE TO TESTIFY. THE RESOLUTION REPRESENTS A FURTHER EFFORT TO CLEAR UP AN EMBARRASSING MATTER WHICH HAS DRAGGED ON FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS. HOUSE SPEAKER THOMAS O'NEILL CALLED FOR PASSAGE OF THE RESOLUTION SO THAT THE INTEGRITY OF THE CONGRESS CAN BE BEYOND REPROACH.

KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER PAK TONG-CHIN RESPONDED WITHOUT DELAY. MISTER PAK REITERATED THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THAT MISTER KIM WOULD NOT GIVE TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CONGRESS AND THAT MR. KIM'S COOPERATION WOULD HAVE TO BE LIMITED TO TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS OR PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ADDED THAT SOUTH KOREA HAD BEEN FULLY COOPERATIVE IN THE PROBE AND WAS READY TO PROVIDE FURTHER COOPERATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VIENNA CONVENTION WHICH PROTECTS MR. KIM'S DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY. BOTH THE RULING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES IN SOUTH KOREA HAVE ALSO

ATTACKED THE RESOLUTION DESPITE THE WARNING THAT SOUTH KOREA FACES A LOSS IN U.S. NON-MILITARY AID.

MISTER KIM, WHO IS CURRENTLY SPECIAL ASSISTANT ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG-HEE, SERVED AS AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON FROM 1967 TO 1973. DURING THAT TIME HE IS ALLEGED TO HAVE GIVEN WELL OVER A HALF-MILLION DOLLARS TO MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS.

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SUPPORT THE STAND TAKEN BY SEOUL AND ITS REFUSAL TO WAIVE MISTER KIM'S DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY. THEY SAY THAT TO FORCE MISTER KIM TO TESTIFY WOULD SET A PRECEDENT THAT MIGHT BE USED AGAINST AMERICAN DIPLOMATS.

THE RESOLUTION DEALS SOLELY WITH ABOUT 58 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AMERICAN FOOD GRAINS WHICH SEOUL WOULD RECEIVE ON A LONG-TERM LOAN BASIS. IT IS NOT RELATED TO AN ESTIMATED EIGHT HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN ARMS PROPOSED TO BE TRANSFERRED TO KOREAN FORCES UPON THE WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN TROOPS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

IN DECEMBER, AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN SOUTH KOREAN PROSECUTORS AND THE U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT EVENTUALLY BROUGHT KOREAN RICE MERCHANT TONG SUN PARK BACK TO THE UNITED STATES. MISTER PARK TESTIFIED IN CONGRESS AS WELL AS IN U.S. CRIMINAL COURTS AND NAMED THIRTY FORMER AND CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SIX MEMBERS OF THE SENATE WHO HAD RECEIVED CONTRIBUTIONS.

CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS, HOWEVER, ALSO HEARD EVIDENCE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF FORMER AMBASSADOR KIM AND SAY THEY CANNOT CONTINUE THEIR WORK WITHOUT HEARING HIS TESTIMONY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CONGRESS, WHILE IT DOES

NOT WANT TO FURTHER EXACERBATE MATTERS WITH SEOUL, FEELS THAT CONCLUSION OF THE INVESTIGATIONS IS NECESSARY TO CLEAR UP THE SCANDAL THAT LIES OVER ITS HEAD.

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JS/RTD